Policy I7: New Open Space Provision

Provision for new open space will be in line with specifically identified needs, informed by a robust assessment. Strategic scale development will be required to provide new greenspaces to meet community needs, and contribute to the quality of placemaking,

Policy I8: New Playing Pitches

New pitches will be provided in line with specifically identified needs, informed by a robust assessment.

Any new playing pitches should be constructed in line with Sport England guidance.

Q X Do the proposed policies for open spaces, sports facilities and playing pitches represent the most appropriate approach for the Local Plan?

What do you consider would represent a sound alternative approach for planning for open spaces, sports facilities and playing pitches in the Medway Local Plan?

Gillingham Football Club

10.33 The plan's vision and strategic objectives aim to establish a regional profile for successful and ambitious growth, gain competitiveness, attract investment and secure and enhance the diverse business base in accessible locations.

10.34 Gillingham Football Club provides an important strategic role in Medway and a focus for the community. Among other factors, notably the close proximity to London and the Universities at Medway, the football club contributes to the competitive profile of the area, enhancing its ability to attract inward investment. Gillingham is the only football league team in Kent.

10.35 National planning policy supports the economic[26] and community[27] benefits that can derive from a leading sports facility in Medway. Such ambitions accord with the Council Plan (2016-21) and the Thames Gateway Kent Plan for Growth (2014-20). It is recognised that new stadiums for successful football clubs can have a positive impact for their towns and cities, for regeneration, the local economy, and health, as well as boosting a sense of community pride in the area.

10.36 Gillingham Football Club has had longstanding ambitions to relocate to a new purpose built stadium. The existing stadium is contained within a tightly knit urban area. This location limits the club's ability to grow. The ground has capacity for just under 11,000 spectators, and as an ambitious football club it is compromised in

[26] NPPF, para 17
[27] NPPF, para 70

achieving its aspirations to emulate the likes of clubs such as Brighton and Bournemouth which have successfully expanded. The constrained urban site also limits the club's ability to provide for non-football related activities on site, which would help with its viability. A wider offer could include education facilities, building on the existing work of the club; sports and associated health activities, such as physiotherapy and sports medicine; leisure and community uses; associated hotel and conference facilities; and provide links to the Universities and further employment uses. Such a strategic development opportunity would have an important role in the economy, community, health and prosperity of Medway.

10.37 The council will continue to work with the football club to secure its future in Medway and to develop its strategic and community role. Any proposal should be multi-functional to address any sports or other community use shortfalls to be identified in the evidence base.

Policy I9: Gillingham Football Club

The Council recognises the positive benefits of a successful football club to the Medway community and economy and will work positively with the club to find an appropriate site for the development of a new stadium with associated facilities that should include education, employment, sports and leisure, community use and hotel and conference facilities. Any proposals must demonstrate the sustainability of the site, include an Environmental Impact Assessment and demonstrate the benefit to Medway as a place to live, work, learn and visit.

QX Do you agree with the proposed policy for Gillingham Football Club?

Do you support the relocation of Gillingham Football Club to a new stadium in Medway?

Where do you consider would be a suitable location for a relocated stadium?

What uses would you expect to see come forward as part of any new stadium proposals?